

CORRECTED COMMUNICATION



MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Sachi A. Hamai, Executive Officer-  
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
Los Angeles, California 90012

At its meeting held April 10, 2007, the Board took the following action:

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The following revised statement was entered into the record for Supervisors Burke and Yaroslavsky:

“In January, the Board of Supervisors approved a Countywide Energy and Environmental Policy that includes the Environmental Stewardship Program. The primary goal of this program is to ‘walk lightly on the earth’ and minimize the County’s environmental footprint by developing policies and adopting innovations designed to reduce the negative environmental impacts of County operations.

“In our community, the prevalence of plastic grocery bags, especially ones made of petroleum-based polyethylene, have a long track record of environmental degradation. The manufacturing of plastic grocery bags consumes enormous amounts of crude oil and natural gas, both nonrenewable resources, and the resulting products, once discarded, clutter landfills, litter our streets, schools, and parks, and join a solid-waste stream that pollutes our coastal and inland waterways and endangers fish and wildlife.

“According to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the United States consumes about 380 billion plastic bags, sacks and wraps a year. However, while recycling programs readily accept paper products, the current recycling rate of plastic bags is very low. For example, research has shown that 20% of paper bags are recycled, while the estimated rate of recycling for plastic bags is as low as one percent. Even when recycled, such plastics can take 1,000 years to decompose. According to the EPA, even paper does not break down at a substantially faster rate than plastic in dark, dry, anaerobic sanitary landfill conditions. Moreover, paper sacks consume far more energy to produce, and take up far more landfill space.

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“While the EPA found that neither paper nor plastic is clearly superior from a green perspective, there are alternatives to the current paper vs. plastic dilemma. Sacks made from recycled paper, or more biodegradable, compostable plastic, would each leave a significantly smaller environmental footprint. Encouraging consumers to buy reusable sacks, or reuse several times the plastic or paper sacks they currently use only once, would respect and protect the environment even more.

“San Francisco recently became the first municipality in the Nation to join a global trend to ban the use of non-recyclable plastic bags in grocery chains and retail stores in favor of compostable plastic bags. The County of Los Angeles should take the next step and examine an even broader range of options to reduce the grocery sack solid-waste stream in our community.”

Therefore, Supervisor Burke made a motion, seconded by Supervisor Yaroslavsky, that the Chief Administrative Officer be instructed to work with the Director of Internal Services and the Director of Public Works to solicit input from outside environmental protection and grocer organizations to:

1. Investigate the issue of polyethylene plastic and paper sack consumption in the County, including the pros and cons of adopting a policy similar to that of San Francisco;
2. Inventory and assess the impact of the current campaigns that urge recycling of paper and plastic sacks; and
3. Report back to the Board with findings and recommendations to reduce grocery and retail sack waste within 90 days.

Supervisor Antonovich made a suggestion that Supervisor Burke’s motion be amended to include in the report back from the Chief Administrative Officer any impact an ordinance similar to the one proposed in San Francisco would have on recycling efforts in Los Angeles County, and any unintended consequences of the ordinance. Supervisor Burke accepted Supervisor Antonovich’s amendment.

Donald L. Wolfe, Director of Public Works, responded to questions posed by the Board.

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After discussion, Supervisor Burke's motion, as amended, seconded by Supervisor Yaroslavsky, was unanimously carried (Supervisor Knabe being absent).

Later in the meeting, on motion of Supervisor Burke, seconded by Supervisor Yaroslavsky, unanimously carried (Supervisor Knabe being absent), the Board reconsidered the foregoing motion for testimony from the public.

Jennifer Forkish, representing the California Grocers Association, and Evelyne Michaut addressed the Board.

After discussion, on motion of Supervisor Burke, seconded by Supervisor Yaroslavsky, unanimously carried (Supervisor Knabe being absent), the Chief Administrative Officer was instructed to work with the Director of Internal Services and the Director of Public Works to solicit input from outside environmental protection and grocer organizations to:

1. Investigate the issue of polyethylene plastic and paper sack consumption in the County, including the pros and cons of adopting a policy similar to that of San Francisco;
2. Inventory and assess the impact of the current campaigns that urge recycling of paper and plastic sacks; and
3. Report back to the Board within 90 days on findings and recommendations to reduce grocery and retail sack waste; any impact an ordinance similar to the one proposed in San Francisco would have on recycling efforts in Los Angeles County; and any unintended consequences of the ordinance.

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Copies distributed:

Each Supervisor  
Chief Administrative Officer  
County Counsel  
Director of Internal Services  
Director of Public Works